

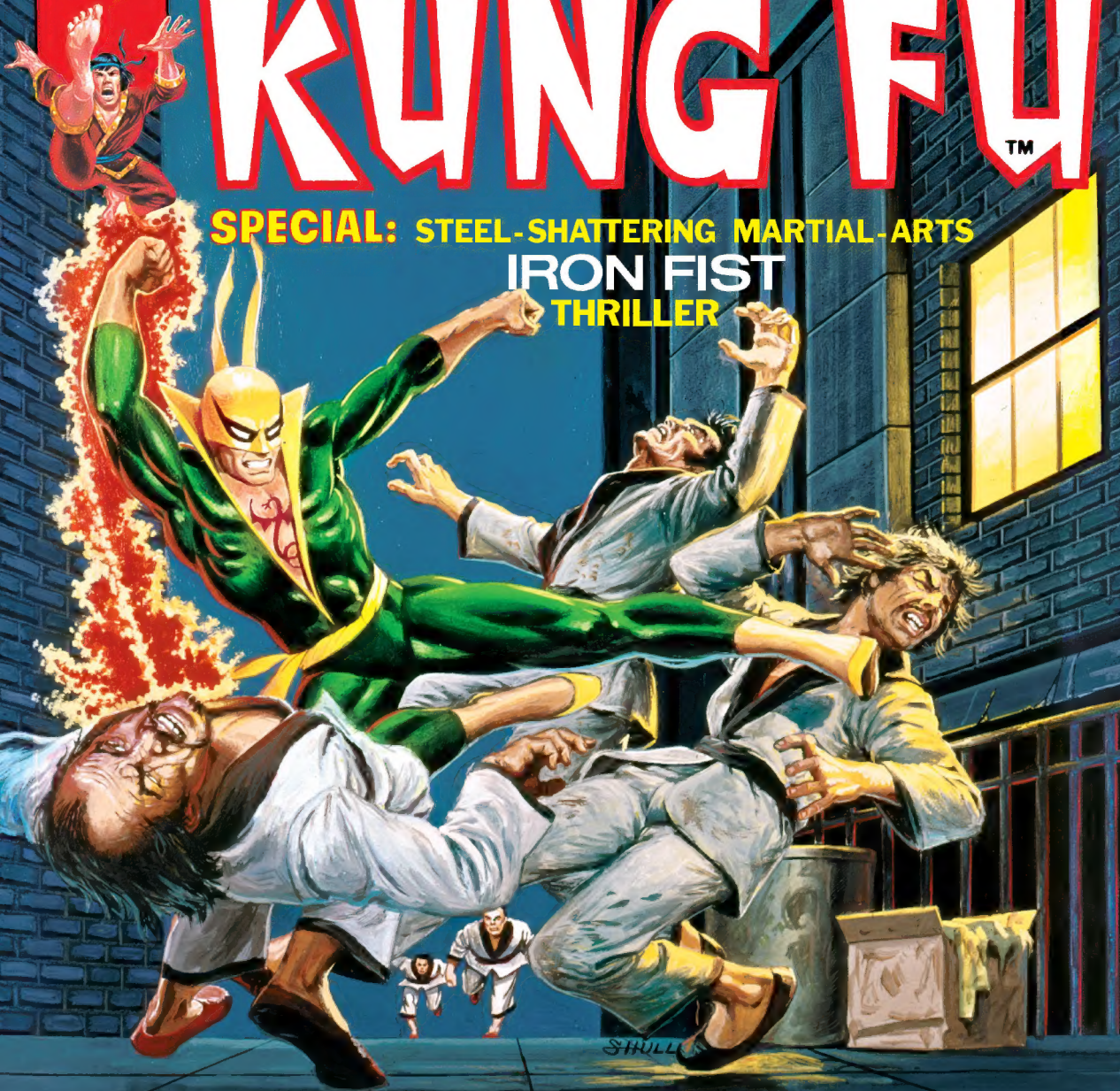
CURTIS

02913
THE DEADLY
HANDS OF
KUNG FU
MAR. No 10
75¢

NO MAN CAN STAND AGAINST...

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU™

SPECIAL: STEEL-SHATTERING MARTIAL-ARTS
IRON FIST
THRILLER



MARVEL

BONUS: SONS OF THE TIGER--FIERCER THAN EVER!



Volume 1, Number 10

March 1975

STAN LEE presents
THE DEADLY HANDS OF
KUNG FU™

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NEW! IRON FIST:

Part One: SLAY NOW, DIE LATER!

*by Tony Isabella, David Kraft,
Frank McLaughlin & Rudy Nebres*

Enter—the Steel Serpent! Enter—death!

Page 5



**Part Two: THE ORIGIN OF
IRON FIST!**

by Doug Moench & Don Perlin
**Bleak, frigid cold . . . ugly death . . .
and the mystical city of K'un-Lun!**

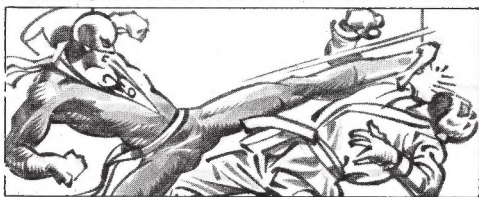
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Part Three: IRON AND STEEL!

*by Tony Isabella, David Kraft,
Frank McLaughlin & Rudy Nebres*
**Bloody battle . . . Kung Fu carnage . . .
Iron Fist versus the Steel Serpent!**

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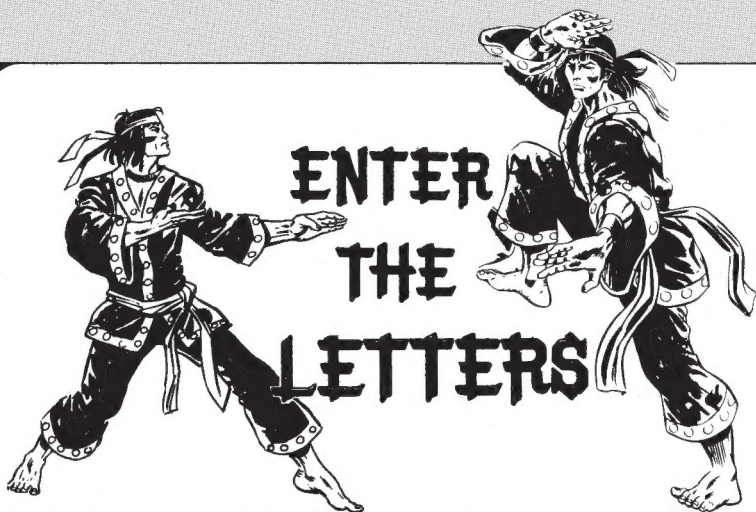
**SONS OF THE TIGER:
THEY WHO DWELL WITHIN!**
*by Bill Mantlo, George Perez &
Mike Esposito*

**Worlds within worlds as the Tiger Sons battle
to reach the stronghold of The Silent Ones!**

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ENTER THE LETTERS (Martial Arts missives & meanderings) 4



We trust that your questions are more pragmatic than metaphysical this issue, and at least one of them probably has to do with wondering why there's only one (count it, one) letters page—and no articles at ALL, for the first time in ten issues.

Well, it's this way. In order to squeeze in the entire 34-page Iron Fist extravaganza originally scheduled for the first issue of a now non-existent mag, in addition to publishing this month's continuing episode of the Tiger Sons, SOMETHING had to go.

That something was Shang-Chi and the articles; but we felt that, in order to bring you something special—something exciting and unusual—for the tenth issue, the sacrifice was worthwhile. We hope you think so, too. Master of Kung Fu and the text material will return next issue, better than ever!

Without wasting further space, since it's at a premium this issue, here're a few of your letters—

Dear Marvel,

The Sons of The Tiger really came alive this issue. Thanks to Bill Mantlo, we readers got a good view of each of the Tiger's personalities. A truly superb story, Bill. The art by George Perez and Bob McLeod was mind-blowing! If this issue is any sample of the graphics to come, then I am eagerly awaiting next issue.

"The Past Assassins," starring Shang-Chi comes in second. The thing that annoys me about this series lately is the art. Mike Vosberg has yet to draw Chi correctly. Shang's costume is different, and he looks more Indian than Chinese. Fortunately Doug Moench's stories have been improving. That's saying a lot, though, 'cause Doug is an excellent writer.

Frank McLaughlin's illustrated lessons of self-defense and the feature on Bruce Lee, I refuse to comment on. They just don't interest me as much as the comics. Lastly, Norem's cover was great. Marvel has the best cover artists in the business.

Jack Frost
RR3, Box 176-C
West Monroe, LA 71291

Dear Sirs,

I really enjoyed your article on Bruce Lee's RETURN OF THE DRAGON in #7. Could you please do the same thing for THE CHINESE CONNECTION—I thought it was a great movie.

Could you also do an article on THE TRIAL OF BILLY JACK. Billy Jack is one of my favorite movie characters, and I hardly see anything written about him. I just loved those kicks that Tom Laughlin and Bong Soo Han did to about 25 men in that movie.

David Bryant
3220 Stratford Ave.
Louisville, KY 40218

You're gonna love us, Dave, 'cause next issue (DEADLY HANDS #11) will have ALL the articles—and the cover—devoted to THE TRIAL OF BILLY JACK; our pages will be replete with more fast-action photos, frenetic facts and honest opinions than you can shake a nunchaku at! Aside from Shang-Chi and the Sons of the Tiger, the entire issue will be a special about the martial arts film phenomenon of the Seventies.

In other words, Dave—we aim to please.

Dear Mr. Kraft:

I just read the very good review that you did in DEADLY HANDS #8, and I am sending you a copy of the second novel in the series, MISTRESS OF DEATH. This one is more true to form, but still has some powerful scenes in the jungles of Nicaragua, and covers the use of some odd martial arts weapons.

My co-author, Piers Anthony, is a science fiction writer with almost 50 novels to his credit, while I have been active in the martial arts for more than 20 years. I am a San-dan (third degree black belt Kodokan) in Judo. I was a former black belt champion of Cuba (twice undefeated) and panamerican contender. I taught Judo in several schools (University of Havana, among others) in Cuba, and after spending several years fighting Castro in Nicaragua and Costa Rica—from which comes the first-hand knowledge of those two countries and specialty of Managua, which

figures prominently in the second novel—I took up Judo once more in the USA.

Last year, at 39, I finished in second place in the New Jersey AAU Judo Championship (lost the last bout by a close decision; I had dislocated my collarbone three fights earlier, and although it slipped back in place, the pain was too much), and this year I won the Metropolitan Master Judo Championship in New York City, plus the Sportsmanship Award. I also do a little writing on my own—I just collaborated on a martial arts project with Steranko, and I'm the book reviewer for the Judo Times.

As you see, I have first-hand knowledge of what we write about.

We have tried to be original in the series, but in this field it is hard. Actually, KIAI was written more than three years ago, before the TV Kung Fu series; we even had to change the hero's name from Caesar Kane to Jason Stryker, as the editors felt that readers might think we were copying from TV.

We have also tried to find fresh plots. Number three, which should be out very soon (BAMBOO BLOODBATH, changed by the editor from our original title TAO) deals mostly with the adventures of Jason inside my native Cuba, during a World Judo Championship held in Havana. I have tried to describe the locale faithfully, and what it is like to live in a Communist dictatorship, without growing propagandistic; there is a sort of tie-in with Watergate corruption in high level government, and I've tried to portray what Kung Fu really is, by describing a kwoon in Havana's Chinatown as I experienced it more than 20 years ago.

Number four is tentatively titled NINJA. It deals with the ninjas of the first novel, utilizing flashbacks to ancient Japan, and dealing with the evil of pollution and the folly of trying to find a simplistic answer. #4 is actually part one of a trilogy.

I have been a Marvel Comics fan since they started, and so is my 10-year-old son. I do hope that you enjoy the rest of the series, as you did KIAI, and that you find them at least a little bit original.

Roberto Fuentes
458 Jefferson Avenue .F
Elizabeth, NJ 07201

Thanks for sharing some behind-the-scenes news with DEADLY HANDS readers, Roberto—and perhaps we'll be able to feature an article on the creation of Jason Stryker in an upcoming issue.

What say you, readers?

Meanwhile, we'll be looking for those other books in the series with keen anticipation. Now, room only for—

READERS' POLL

Shang-Chi and the Tiger Sons have been running neck-in-neck for several issues now; last month, the Tigers came in first. This time, by two votes, they lose the number one spot to Fu Manchu's ornery offspring.

- 1) "THE PAST ASSASSINS!" by DOUG MOENCH, MIKE VOSBERG and AL MILGROM takes first, nudging out—
- 2) "TIGERS IN A MIND-CAGE!" by the Renaissance team of BILL MANTLO, GEORGE PEREZ and BOB MCLEOD, all of whom have been mumbling through their non-existent collective beard about their narrow defeat, while—
- 3) "THE WAY OF THE DRAGON," an in-depth scrutiny of Lee the Dragon's return by DON MCGREGOR takes third.
- 4) "THE BASIC TECHNIQUE OF BLOCKING," by FRANK McLAUGHLIN.
- 5) "UNDER THE PAGODA," by JOHN WARNER.

There it is, karateka. Oh, and before we go, we'd like to plug THE 1975 ORIENTAL WORLD OF SELF DEFENSE, to be sponsored by Aaron Banks at Madison Square Garden on 2 p.m. Sunday, June 8th, 1975. If you saw Michele Wolfman's photo feature on the 1974 meet, printed last issue, then you know it's an event you DON'T wanna miss.

And tell us what you thought of the black-and-white premiere of IRON FIST! The address is—

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU
MARVEL MAGAZINE GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022



PROLOGUE:

THE AIR VIBRATES WITH THE FAMILIAR SOUND OF MAN-MADE THUNDER, WHICH PERVADES EVEN A SUNNY AFTERNOON AT KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT--

--BOOMING OFF THE OPAQUE SOUND-PROOF WINDOWPANES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS BUILDING AND SIGNALLING THE APPEARANCE OF YET ANOTHER IMPORTANT MAN--

--IN AN UNENDING SERIES OF IMPORTANT MEN WHO DAILY COME AND GO HERE, ONLY THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT. THIS ONE IS AN ALMOST-UNBELIEVABLE MAN, WITH AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE REPUTATION FOR RUTHLESSNESS...

...THIS ONE IS THE STEEL SERPENT!

WILL YA LOOK AT THAT!

HE'S EVERY BIT AS TOUGH-LOOKING AS THEY SAY!

ALOOFLY, THE MASSIVE GIANT OF A MAN PUSHES FORWARD, NOT WAITING FOR HIS COTERIE OF BRAWNY PUPILS TO EXIT THE PLANE. HE IS A SULLEN FIGURE OF CONTROVERSY--AN UNSTOPPABLE BLUR OF CARNAGE AT MARTIAL ARTS TOURNAMENTS.

HE'S JUST PLAIN MEAN.

I GOTTA PICTURE, TIM!



GOOD, LESLIE -- TRY FOR ANOTHER ONE! SHOTS OF THE STEEL SERPENT ARE ABOUT AS RARE AS A SMOGLESS DAY IN MANHATTAN.

NO SWEAT, TIM-- I GOT 'IM, PRETTY AS YOU PLEASE...

THE CLICK OF THE SHUTTER AND THE SWAK OF A KARATE SLASH ARE ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS--



--FOLLOWED BY--

--THE SWISH OF AIR AND THE MEATY CRUNCH OF AN ANGRY BLOW--

--TO AN EXTREMELY VULNERABLE CHIN.



THE STEEL SERPENT GROWLS ONLY THREE LOW-VOICED WORDS...



YOU WILL DIE!!

-- BEFORE STALKING GRIMLY AWAY.

THAT WAS ONE HELL OF AN UNCALLED FOR ACT.

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? MARLON BRANDO OR JACKIE KENNEDY? HE MIGHT NOT WANT HIS PICTURE TAKEN... BUT IT'LL COST HIM A LAW SUIT.



"... AND WHAT DID HE MEAN BY TELLING ME I'LL DIE "ASKS LESLIE NERVOUSLY, " WAS IT A THREAT?"

"HE WAS JUST HAVING HIS CRUDE IDEA OF A JOKE," ANSWERS TIM, "CAUSE THERE'S A RUMOR HE KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE DELAYED DEATH BLOW-- BUT THERE IS NO SUCH THING IN FACT--AND YOU CAN SLAP A SUBPOENA ON HIM AT HIS MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL."

LESLIE WALKER MIGHT HAVE DONE JUST THAT... EXCEPT HE WON'T HAVE THE CHANCE... FOR MOMENTS LATER

TIM: I--I FEEL DIZZY... NAUSEOUS... CAN'T BREATHE--

LESLIE!

--THINK I'M GONNA... UNGH...

LESLIE WALKER TOPPLES HEAVILY ONTO THE PAVEMENT THEN, RASPING OUT A STRANGULATED GURGLE THAT DIES AWAY WITH THE ABRUPT SPASMS THAT SEIZE HIM.

THE SMALL CROWD HAS MOVED ON, AND ONLY A BENUMBED TIM DONAHUE IS LEFT TO STARE, DISBELIEVING AND AFRAID--

--AT THE CRUMPLED BODY OF HIS FRIEND, AYE, AT THE LIFELESS, GROTESQUE HANDIWORK OF THE CALLOUS HUMAN ANIMAL CALLED--

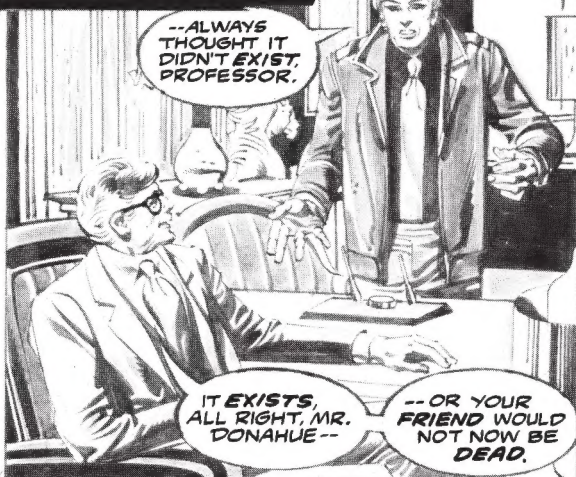
--THE STEEL SERPENT!

AND IN THAT COLD MOMENT, TIM DONAHUE KNOWS ANGER... AND VOWS TO KNOW--
REVENGE!

IRON FIST SLAY NOW, DIE LATER
THE LIVING WEAPON

YOU STAND IMMOBILE BEHIND THE CURTAIN, SILENT, PATIENT-- BUT POISED FOR LIGHTNING MOTION AT ANY INSTANT...

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU NOT TO OVERHEAR THE ONGOING CONVERSATION...



... AND YOU DO NOT LIKE WHAT YOU HEAR.

FOR IT IS AN UGLY STORY OF DELIBERATE BRUTALITY--

--OF A MAN WHO MURDERS AT WHIM WITH A DELAYED DEATH BLOW... AND AS YET--

--IT IS A STORY WITHOUT AN ENDING...

...THOUGH ONE IS DEFINITELY IN THE MAKING.

--BUT I'VE GOTTA NAIL THE STEEL SERPENT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER-- AND PROVE HE MURDERED LESLIE... CALLOUSLY AND IN COLD BLOOD!

THE DOOR CLOSSES WITH AN AIR OF FINALITY, AND YOU EMERGE FROM BEHIND THE HEAVY ORIENTAL DRAPES...

I AM GOING AFTER THIS MAN, THE SERPENT.

IF I THINK OF ANYTHING, I'LL CALL YOU, MR. DONAHUE.

I'M SORRY YOU CAN'T HELP ME, PROFESSOR--



WHY, DANNY?

DO YOU FANCY
THE ROLE OF A HERO,
LIKE IN THOSE BLOODY
KUNG FU FILMS?

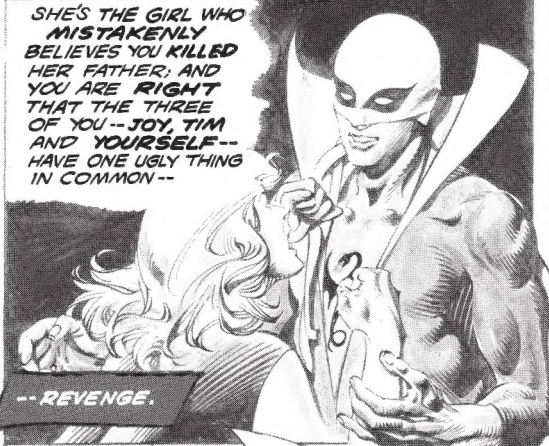


MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE
TIM DONAHUE'S QUEST
FOR VENGEANCE REMINDS
ME OF TWO PEOPLE VERY
CLOSE TO ME--

-- MYSELF...

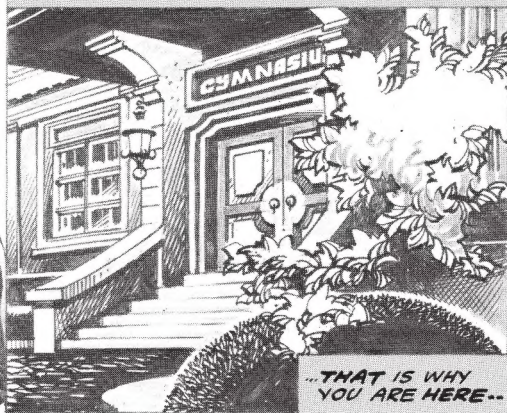
".. AND JOY MEACHUM."

SHE'S THE GIRL WHO
MISTAKENLY
BELIEVES YOU KILLED
HER FATHER; AND
YOU ARE RIGHT
THAT THE THREE
OF YOU--JOY, TIM
AND YOURSELF--
HAVE ONE UGLY THING
IN COMMON--



-- REVENGE.

IT IS AN ULTIMATELY EMPTY AND SELF-
DESTRUCTIVE OBSESSION, AS YOU HAVE
BITTERLY LEARNED, AND YOU WOULD
SPARE ITS EFFECTS ON YET ANOTHER...



...THAT IS WHY
YOU ARE HERE...

--IN THIS NIGHTED
AREA OF LOWER
MANHATTAN,
NEAR THE VILLAGE.



THAT, AND A SENSE OF COLD
FURY AT THOSE SUCH AS
THE STEEL SERPENT WHO
PUT TO MISUSE THE FORMI-
DABLE POWERS OF THE
MARTIAL ARTS.



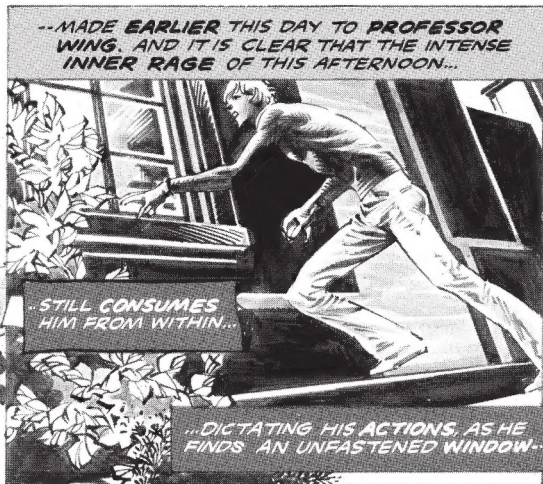
BUT WAIT
SOMEONE
ELSE...

...PROWLs HERE, QUIETLY,
WITH FIRM SENSE OF
PURPOSE.



IT IS AS YOU FEARED--
TIM DONAHUE HAS
ALREADY FOUND
THE STEEL SERPENT'S
LAIR--

--AND SEEKS
TO FULFILL
HIS VOW--



--MADE EARLIER THIS DAY TO PROFESSOR
WING. AND IT IS CLEAR THAT THE INTENSE
INNER RAGE OF THIS AFTERNOON...

STILL CONSUMES
HIM FROM WITHIN...

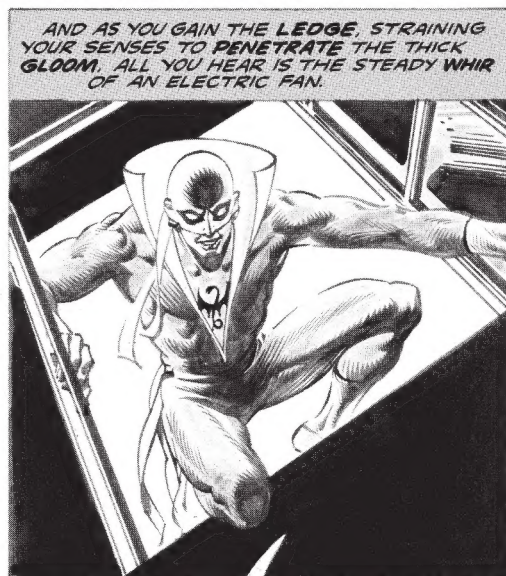
...DICTATING HIS ACTIONS, AS HE
FINDS AN UNFASTENED WINDOW--



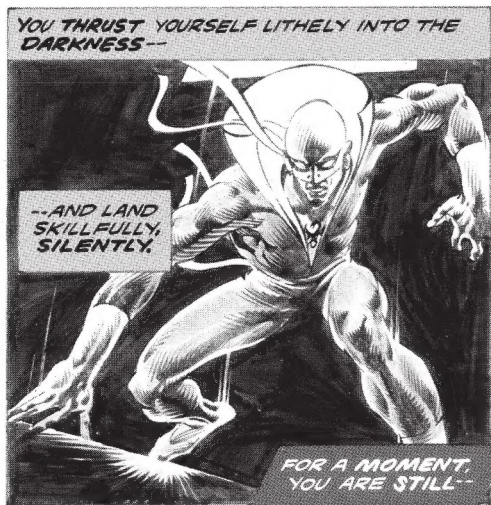
--AND PULLS HIMSELF UP TO DROP
INSIDE THE LIGHTLESS BUILDING.

THE MUTED SOUND OF
HIS GRACELESS LAND-
ING REACHES YOUR
KEEN EARS, THEN IS
SWALLOWED BY SILENCE.
AND THEN--

--YOU
FOLLOW.



AND AS YOU GAIN THE LEDGE, STRAINING
YOUR SENSES TO PENETRATE THE THICK
GLOOM, ALL YOU HEAR IS THE STEADY WHIR
OF AN ELECTRIC FAN.



YOU THRUST YOURSELF LITHELY INTO THE
DARKNESS--

--AND LAND
SKILLFULLY,
SILENTLY.

FOR A MOMENT,
YOU ARE STILL--



--THEN...

KLIK

...YOU
STAND
EXPOSED.



THE WHIRRING OF THE FAN
DISGUISED ANY SLIGHT
NOISES OF--

A
TRAP--!

BUT YOU ARE IRON FIST, AND
SO --EVEN AS YOUR EYES
ACCUSTOM THEMSELVES TO
THE SUDDEN LIGHT--

--YOU ARE
READY!

THIS IS OUR FIRST
MEETING, IRON FIST--
AND OUR LAST! IF YOU
DOUBT THIS SIMPLE
FACT, KNOW THEN THAT
YOUR MURDERER
IS ME--

--THE STEEL
SERPENT!

YOU SPEAK
AS THOUGH YOU
KNEW I WAS
COMING.

IT IS A STATEMENT
THAT IMPLIES AN
ANSWER.

WE ANTICIPATED YOUR PRESENCE,
THOUGH NOT QUITE SO QUICKLY...I
WOULD HAVE LURED YOU HERE
SOONER OR LATER. IT IS JUST AS
WELL YOU ARE HERE NOW--
FOR YOU ARE--

--THE
FINAL
TEST!

WHEN I HAVE
BUTCHERED
YOU--

-- THE FABLED WEALTH AND IMMORTALITY OF
ANCIENT K'UN-LUN SHALL ELUDE ME NO LONGER."

"TWICE I
HAVE BEEN
TO THE
CITY WHICH
ONLY
APPEARS
TO THIS
WORLD ON
A SINGLE
DAY EACH
TEN
YEARS--!"

--TWICE DID I CHALLENGE
THE AUGUST PERSONAGE
IN JADE FOR THAT WHICH
I DEMANDED.

"TWICE, I LOST!"

"BUT I HAVE WORKED HARD TO INCREASE MY SKILL. AND IF I CAN DESTROY YOU, THEN I KNOW WHEN NEXT K'UN-LUN APPEARS--I WILL NOT LOSE!"

YOU SAY NOTHING, IRON FIST; RATHER YOU PREPARE FOR STEEL SERPENT'S FIRST MOVE.

IT COMES--

--A POUNDING WAVE BLOW MEANT TO SURPRISE--

SWAK

--BUT WHICH ONLY SENDS YOU INTO A NIMBLE BACKFLIP. THE BATTLE IS JOINED--

AT HIM --NOW!!

I WANT TO MAKE SURE HE'S AT HIS PEAK WHEN I WIPE HIM OUT!

--AND ALREADY THE SERPENT SHOWS HIS COLORS.



YOU HAVE FACED BLOOD-THIRSTY GROUPS OF WOULD-BE ASSASSINS BEFORE-- MOST NOTABLY THE CULT OF KARA-KAI--

--AND YOU STILL LIVE.

THEN, AS NOW, COMBAT WAS NO AMUSING CONTEST OF SHOWMANSHIP. FOR YOU, IT IS ALWAYS A THING OF INTENSITY--

--FOR DID YOU NOT HONE YOUR ENTIRE LIFE ON ITS HARSH PRECEPTS, TOWARD ONE RELENTLESS AND SELF-POISONING GOAL?

YOU ARE IRON FIST, AND AS YOUR FOES CLOSE IN, YOU ASSUME THE CAT STANCE--

--THEN YOU SIDESTEP A CHARGING ASSASSIN, TO LEAP OVER A FLESH-HUNGRY SAMURAI SWORD--

--AND UNDER A VICIOUSLY FLAILING MACE--

ONLY TO STOP THE ABRUPT DESCENT OF A WICKED BO STAVE!

AND THEN, AS YOUR ASSAILANTS GAPE IN UNCOMPREHENDING DISBELIEF--

--YOU ROLL AWAY--



YOU KNOW THEN, WHEN THIS MAN BREAKS THE SILENCE TO GLOAT, WHAT THE OUTCOME --

-- OF THIS UNEQUAL MATCH --

-- WILL BE... AND YOU ARE RIGHT.

A SWIFT MONKEY BLOW--

-- FOLLOWED IN LIGHTNING SUCCESSION BY THE LOUD SNAP OF--



-- AN ANGRY DRAGON STAMP TO HIS ELBOW--

KRAK



-- RENDERS YOUR UNWORTHY OPPONENT QUITE UNCONSCIOUS!

YET...

...THIS HAS MADDED THE OTHERS, AND YOU
DELIVER SIMULTANEOUS RAM'S HEAD AND
MONKEY BLOWS.

NOW YOU WHIRL AND LANCE
OUT WITH A SHUTO STROKE
TO A SOFT THROAT--

--THUS PREPARING
FOR THE RAPID
ATTACK OF HE WHO
WIELDS--

--THE SAI
SWORDS!

GURKI!

YOU TAKE HIM
OUT WITH A
TIGER CLAW
TO THE EYES--

--AND YOU
WAIT THEN--

--BUT THERE
ARE NOT.

THE WOUNDED
ARE CONTENT
TO REMAIN
WHERE THEY
ARE--

--TO SEE IF THERE
WILL BE ANY MORE
ATTACKS--

--ON THE
FLOOR.

AND YOU TURN TO STARE
ACROSS THE STREWN BODIES
OF THE STEEL SERPENT'S
"PUPILS"... DIRECTLY AT THE
MAN HIMSELF.

YOU REALIZE THAT IT HAS ONLY BEEN MERE MOMENTS
SINCE YOU PURSUED TIM DONAHUE INTO
THIS GYM--

-- BUT ALREADY YOU SHALL EXTRACT FULL
RETRIBUTION FROM THIS OGRE WHO KILLED
A MAN WITH CALLOUS DISDAIN FOR HUMAN LIFE.

IF ONLY YOU DIDN'T FEEL... SO... DIZZY.

I SEE THE TINY DRUG
TIPPED NEEDLES MY
MEN USED ON YOU IN
BATTLE--

--ARE HAVING THE
DESIRED EFFECT!

AFTER ALL, YOU DIDN'T
REALLY BELIEVE WHAT I
SAID ABOUT WANTING YOU
DEAD.

DID
YOU?

FOR WITH
THE HOLDER OF
THE IRON FIST DRUGGED
AND IN MY POWER --
K'UN-LUN WILL AT LAST
BE MINE!

AND CHAIN IRON FIST
WELL, LIKE K'UN-LUN
ITSELF, HE NOW BELONGS
TO--

--THE
STEEL
SERPENT!

TAKE BOTH
OUR PRISONERS
TO THE BASE-
MENT CELL-- NOW!

THE AWESOME ORIGIN OF IRON FIST!

IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO WHEN FOUR INSIGNIFICANT FIGURES PICKED THEIR WAY ACROSS A TRACKLESS LANDSCAPE OF SNOW-GLOSSSED ASIAN WASTE.

YOU WERE ONE OF THOSE FOUR FIGURES, DANIEL RAND-- THEN A BOY OF NINE, IN THE COMPANY OF YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER, WENDALL AND HEATHER RAND...

MEACHUM WAS THERE TOO... HAROLD MEACHUM, YOUR FATHER'S BUSINESS PARTNER. YOU WILL NEVER FORGET HIM...

WENDELL, YOU'RE MIGHTY LUCKY I'M YOUR FRIEND AS WELL AS BUSINESS PARTNER... OTHERWISE I **NEVER** WOULD'VE COME WITH YOU TO SCOUR THE HIMALAYAS IN SEARCH OF YOUR OWN MAD VERSION OF SHANGRI-LA--

--WHEN I COULD BE SAFE AND SOUND BACK IN NEW YORK.

I APPRECIATE YOUR COMPANY, HAROLD-- BUT YOU MUST REALIZE THAT MY BELIEF IN THE MYSTICAL CITY OF K'UN-LUN IS MORE THAN A MAD VISION.

THE SHAPING OF VENGEANCE

DOUG MOENCH, WRITER · DON PERLIN, ARTIST ... WITH RESPECT TO ROY THOMAS, GIL KANE, LEN WEIN, AND LARRY HAMA-- ORIGINATORS OF THE IRON FIST LEGEND.

EVEN YOUR MOTHER DOUBTED THE PURPOSE OF A QUEST WHICH SEEMED SPAWNED IN FANTASY...

I RESPECT YOUR GOALS, WENDELL -- YOUR REASON FOR COMING HERE... BUT ONLY IF IT WEREN'T SO COLD. AND THE WIND--!

THE WIND CARRIES THE SILENT MUSIC OF THE K'UN-LUN MOUNTAIN, DARLING. IF ONLY YOU COULD HEAR IT AS I CAN.

YES, YOUR FATHER HAD ALWAYS BEEN AN ENIGMA... ONE YOU RECOGNIZED EVEN AS A LAD OF NINE YEARS

BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT-- THIS INSANE DEFIANCE OF HARSH ELEMENTS... THIS INTERMINABLE SEARCH FOR THE K'UN-LUN MOUNTAIN, THE MYTHICAL DWELLING PLACE OF THE IMMORTALS IN CHINESE LEGEND.

PERHAPS IT WAS YOUR THOUGHTS WHICH DISTRACTED YOU, CAUSED YOU TO TAKE A CARELESS STEP --

-- AND LOSE YOUR FOOTING ON THE SNOW-GLAZED BRIDGE.

HELP!

AND THEN, AS YOU BEGAN TO CROSS THE SNOW-ENCRUSTED NATURAL BRIDGE WHICH SPANNED A DIZZING CHASM, IT SEEMED AS THOUGH YOU COULD HEAR THAT SILENT MUSIC, DANIEL RAND... A SOFT TINKLING SOUND SHIMMERING IN THE FRIGID DISTANCE, OR PERHAPS MERELY IN THE DEPTHS OF YOUR MIND...

... AND YOU REFLECTED ON WHAT YOU KNEW OF YOUR FATHER-- HOW HE HAD APPEARED FROM NOWHERE, A DECADE EARLIER, TO WIN YOUR MOTHER WITH HIS MYSTERIOUS CHARISMA AND TO BUILD AN INSTANT ENTERPRISE WITH EVEN MORE MYSTERIOUS FUNDS.

YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER WHIRLED TO AID YOU--

-- BUT YOUR WEIGHT PULLED THEM FROM THE BRIDGE AS WELL.

HAROLD-- HOLD FAST! BRACE YOURSELF, MAN--!

AND HAROLD MEACHUM WAS
ABLE TO RETAIN HIS FOOTING...
BUT THE ROPE BETWEEN YOU
AND YOUR FATHER SNAPPED--



--PLUNGING THE TWO OF
YOU DOWN TO THE SNOW-
PACKED LEDGE mere
INCHES FROM THE
YAWNING CHASM BELOW..



... AND LEAVING YOUR FATHER
TO DANGLE PRECARIOUSLY
OVER THAT BOTTOMLESS
ABYSS.

HAROLD--
PULL ME
UP!-
FAST--!

WE'VE GOT
TO GET
ANOTHER
ROPE-- SAVE
HEATHER
AND DANNY!



SURE, I'LL
PULL YOU
UP, OLD
FRIEND--



--BUT NOT FOR
THE REASON YOU--



--EXPECT!



YOU WATCHED-- FROZEN WITH
HORROR-- AS HAROLD MEACHUM
STAMPED HIS SPIKED BOOT
DOWN ON YOUR FATHER'S
HANDS, CRUSHING THEM
REPEATEDLY AS A SNARL OF
HATRED TWISTED HIS
SUDDENLY EVIL FACE...



YOUR FATHER WAS A STRONG MAN, BOTH IN BODY AND IN SPIRIT.

HE SUSTAINED HIS GRIP ON THAT GLACIAL ROCK FOR A SUBJECTIVE ETERNITY...

FACE IT, WENDELL-- MEACHUM & RAND IS FINISHED--!



BUT EVEN A MAN WITH AN IRON WILL COULD NOT ENDURE THAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT FOREVER.

WENDELL! OH MY GOD-- WENDELL!!

--AND IN ITS PLACE... MEACHUM, INC.--!



YOUR MOTHER'S SHRILL SCREAM OF ANGUISH SLICED THROUGH YOUR EARS... AND YOU REMEMBER A QUEASY SENSE OF VERTIGO AS YOU PEERED DOWN THE CHASM TO WATCH YOUR FATHER'S PLUMMETING FORM.

HE LOOKED LIKE A BROKEN DOLL. AND HE FELL FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



IT WAS A SIGHT YOU WOULD NEVER FORGET, ONE WHICH WOULD FILL EVERY ONE OF YOUR DREAMS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE--

--ALL OF THEM ACCOMPANIED BY THE HAUNTING SOUND OF YOUR MOTHER'S HORRIFIED SOBBING.



YOUR MOTHER BROKE THEN. STILL SOBBING, SHE BEGAN TO HURL ROCKS AT THE GLOATING FORM OF YOUR FATHER'S MURDERER... AND EACH ONE OF THOSE ROCKS CARRIED HER HATRED.

HEATHER! STOP IT! I DID IT FOR YOU--! I KILLED HIM FOR YOU!!

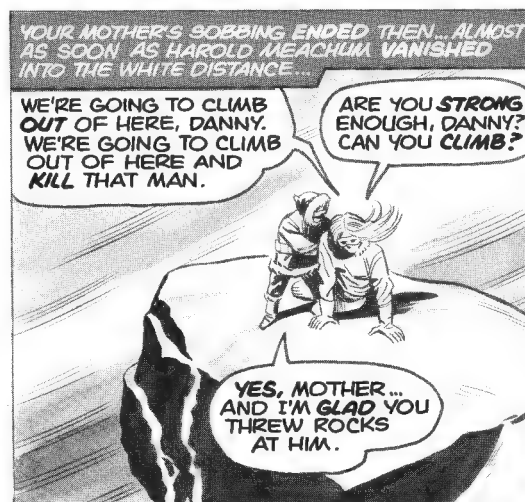
I LOVE YOU-- I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU!



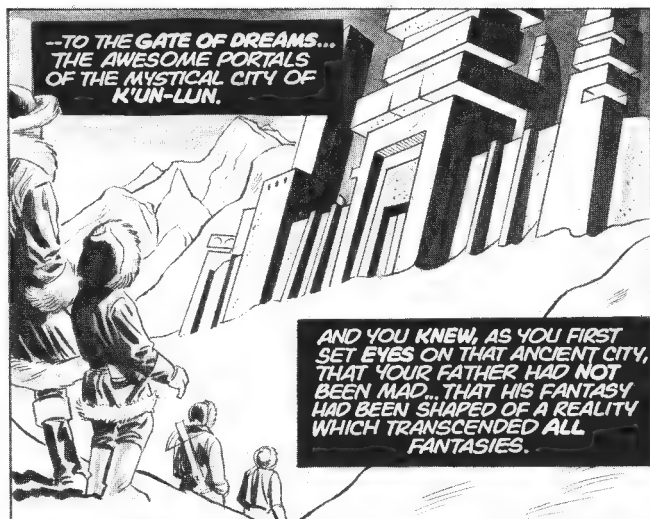
BUT THE HATRED IN YOUR MOTHER ONLY GREW...

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I'M ASKING YOU TO COME BACK WITH ME!

DO YOU WANT TO DIE OUT HERE--IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?!







—TO THE GATE OF DREAMS...
THE AWESOME PORTALS
OF THE MYSTICAL CITY OF
K'UN-LUN.

AND YOU KNEW, AS YOU FIRST
SET EYES ON THAT ANCIENT CITY,
THAT YOUR FATHER HAD NOT
BEEN MAD... THAT HIS FANTASY
HAD BEEN SHAPED OF A REALITY
WHICH TRANSCENDED ALL
FANTASIES.

YOU WERE LED, THEN, TO A GREAT
MARBLE THRONE, AND YOU WERE
INTRODUCED TO THE VENERABLE
YU-TI, THE HOODED ONE, WHO IS
KNOWN AS THE AUGUST PERSONAGE
IN JADE...

WELCOME, DANIEL RAND.
MAY YOUR STAY WITH US
BE A REWARDING ONE.



WE ARE AWARE OF YOUR GRIEF.
IF THERE IS EVER ANYTHING YOU
SHOULD WANT, WE SHALL DO
OUR BEST TO GRANT IT.

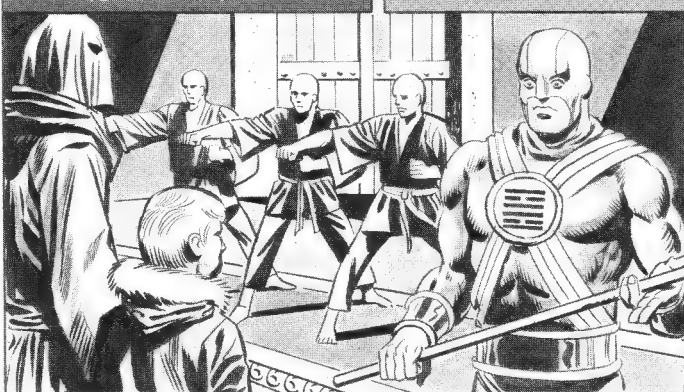


THERE WAS SOMETHING YOU
WANTED... THE ONLY THING YOU
WANTED... AND YOU ANNOUNCED
IT IMMEDIATELY.

THEN GRANT ME
REVENGE, MR. YU-TI...

GRANT ME THE
POWER TO KILL MY
FATHER'S MURDERER!

THE AUGUST PERSONAGE IN
JADE HAD SEEMED DISAPPOINTED
BY YOUR REPLY... HAD TRIED TO
DISCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF
YOUR HATRED...



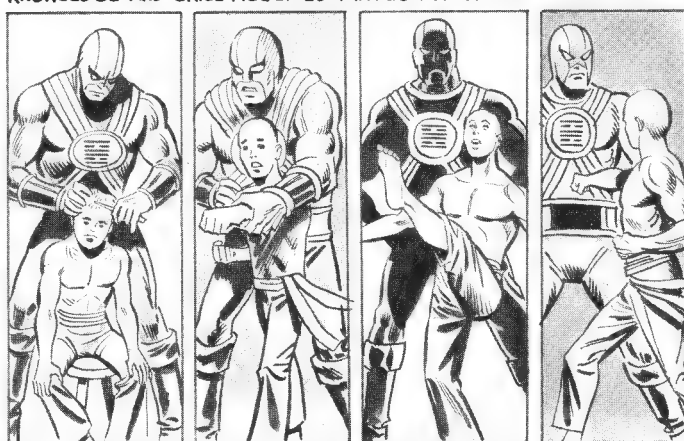
...AND YET HE HAD USHERED
YOU INTO A VAST HALL DEDI-
CATED TO THE DISCIPLINE OF
THE MARTIAL ARTS, AND HAD
INTRODUCED YOU TO--



--LEI KUNG, THE
THUNDERER.
IF YOU WISH,
DANIEL, HE
WILL TRAIN
YOU...

...AND PERHAPS
BY STRENGTHENING
YOUR BODY, YOU WILL
PURIFY YOUR SPIRIT--
AND CLEANSE IT OF
THIS LUST FOR
VENGEANCE.

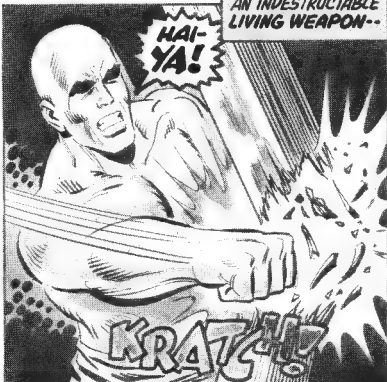
YOU ACCEPTED YU-TI'S OFFER, AND YOU FILLED LONG YEARS WITH A
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL ACQUIRED THROUGH LEI KUNG'S TRAINING...



BUT NEVER ONCE IN THOSE TEN ARDUOUS YEARS DID YOU
FORGET YOUR SOLE MOTIVE OF VENGEANCE...

AND WHEN AT LAST
YOU COULD LEARN NO
MORE FROM LEI KUNG--

--WHEN AT LAST
YOU HAD HONED
YOUR BODY INTO
AN INDESTRUCTABLE
LIVING WEAPON--



HAI-
YA!

KRAZCH!

--YOU WENT TO THE AUGUST
PERSONAGE IN JADE.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH. I HAVE
LEARNED ALL I CAN-- BUT I
FEEL IT IS NOT ENOUGH.



THEN, DANIEL RAND,
THERE IS ONLY **ONE MORE**
WAY TO GAIN WHAT YOU
DESIRE... BUT IT IS A WAY
PAVED WITH PERIL.

ARE YOU PREPARED
TO RISK DEATH--

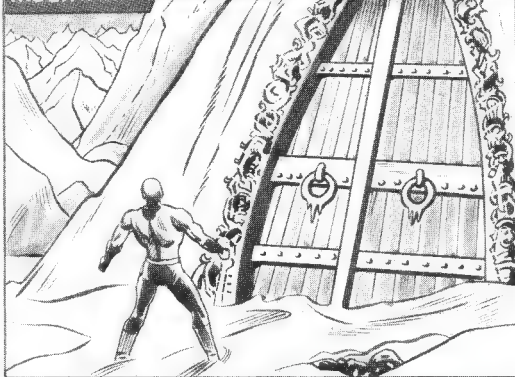


-- TO GAIN
THE POWER
OF THE
IRON FIST?!

I... AM
PREPARED.



AND SO YOU HAD FOLLOWED THE AUGUST
PERSONAGE'S INSTRUCTIONS, AND YOU FOUND
YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE GATE OF DREAMS...
HURLING A CHALLENGE AT A PAIR OF ORNATE
DOORS SET INTO THE FACE OF K'UN-LUN
MOUNTAIN--



-- A CHALLENGE ABRUPTLY ANSWERED
BY SHOU-LAO THE UNDYING... THE
FLAME-HISSING SERPENT-LORD
CONDEMNED TO GUARD HIS OWN
MOLTEN HEART, LONG AGO RIPPED
FROM HIS HIDEOUS BODY...



...THE HEART
YOU HAD COME
TO FIND...



...AND THE HEART YOU WOULD KILL TO ATTAIN.

AND SO YOU BATTLED SHOU-LAO, WITH ALL THE SKILL OF YOUR TRAINING... AND THOUGH YOU WEAKENED HIM, YOU REALIZED THAT HIS DEFEAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE...



FOR HOW COULD YOU DEFEAT A CREATURE WHO COULD NOT BE KILLED?... A CREATURE WHOSE HEART HAD BEEN TORN FROM ITS SCALY BREAST-- AND WHOSE LIFE WAS SUSTAINED BY THE MYSTIC EMANATIONS WHICH ENTERED ITS BODY THROUGH THE SCAR LEFT FROM THE REMOVAL OF ITS HEART...?

THE ANSWER: BY SEALING THAT SCAR--



--WITH YOUR OWN BODY.

YOUR CHEST SIZZLED WITH SEARING PAIN AS YOU GRASPED SHOU-LAO AND SQUEEZED THE STRANGELY SHAPED SCAR TO YOUR BODY...

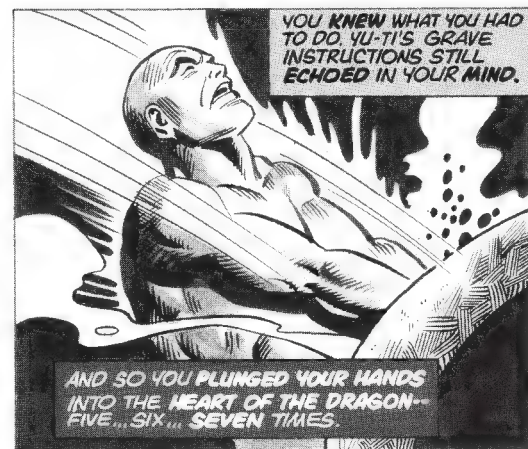


...AND WHEN SHOU-LAO WENT LIMP, YOU WERE BRANDED WITH A REMINDER OF THAT PAIN...



...AND YOU WERE REWARDED WITH ENTRANCE INTO THE SERPENT-LORD'S LAIR...

--AND ACCESS TO HIS MOLTEN, BUBBLING HEART.



YOU KNEW WHAT YOU HAD TO DO. YU-TI'S GRAVE INSTRUCTIONS STILL ECHOED IN YOUR MIND.

AND SO YOU PLUNGED YOUR HANDS INTO THE HEART OF THE DRAGON-- FIVE... SIX... SEVEN TIMES.

AFTER THE SEVENTH TIME, YOU EXTRACTED YOUR HANDS FROM THE MOLTEN ESSENCE, AND YOU SAW THAT THEY GLOWED...



...GLOWED WITH THE POWER OF THE IRON FIST.

YOU RETURNED TO K'UN-LUN THEN, AND YOU WERE AWARDED YOUR SYMBOLIC COSTUME... LED TO THE SACRED INDOOR ARENA PRESIDED BY YU-TI AND THE LUNG-WANG-- THE DRAGON-KINGS...



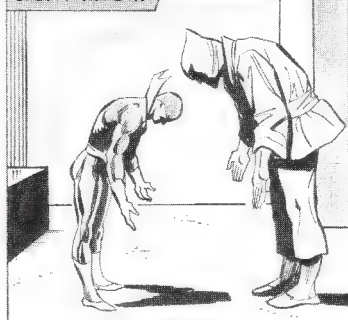
...THERE TO PERFORM THE CHALLENGE OF THE MANY.

A CHALLENGE YOU FULFILLED... WITH THE DEFEAT OF ALL POSED AGAINST YOU...



...AND A CHALLENGE FOLLOWED BY A SECOND TRIAL--THE CHALLENGE OF THE ONE--

--IN WHICH YOU FACED SHU-HU, THE LORD OF LIGHTNING...



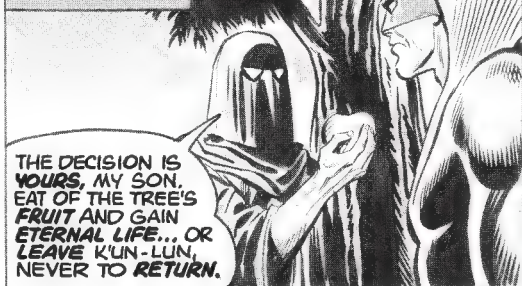
IT HAD BEEN YOUR SUPREME TRIAL, AND YOU HAD INVOKED THE SEETHING POWER OF THE IRON FIST--



--TO DEFEAT SHU-HU, AND TO LEARN THAT THE LIGHTNING-LORD WAS BOTH MORE THAN MAN... AND LESS.

THE AUGUST ONE AND HIS FOUR DRAGON-KINGS HAD APPROVED YOUR DEMONSTRATION, AND CONCURRED IN BESTOWING THE SACRED PRIVILEGE OF K'UN-LUN UPON YOU.

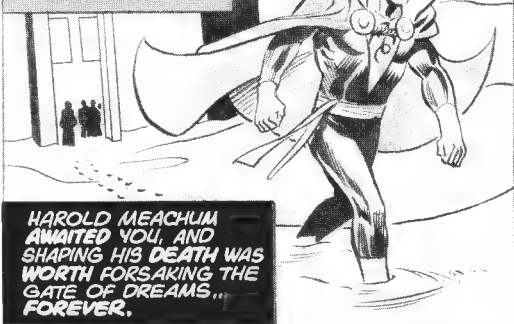
YU-TI CONDUCTED YOU TO THE TREE OF IMMORTALITY IN THE ANCIENT CITY'S SPRAWLING PLAZA...



THE DECISION IS YOURS, MY SON. EAT OF THE TREE'S FRUIT AND GAIN ETERNAL LIFE... OR LEAVE K'UN-LUN, NEVER TO RETURN.

YOU HAD KNOWN WHAT YOUR DECISION WOULD BE, LONG BEFORE THE CHOICE WAS POSED TO YOU... AND WHEN THE AUGUST ONE HAD REVEALED TO YOU THAT YOUR FATHER HAD BEEN HIS BROTHER, YOUR DECISION HARDENED.

FOR NOW YOU WERE IRON FIST, AN INSTRUMENT OF LIVING VENGEANCE-- AND THE OBJECT OF YOUR VENGEANCE LAY OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF MYSTICAL K'UN-LUN.



HAROLD MEACHUM AWAITED YOU, AND SHAPING HIS DEATH WAS WORTH FORSAKING THE GATE OF DREAMS... FOREVER.

PART
THREE

IRON AND STEEL!

IT IS HUMID, AND THE THICK HOT AIR IS NAUSEOUSLY CLOYING IN THE DARKNESS OF THE OLD BASEMENT. THE RANCID STENCH OF ROTTED AGE PERMEATES THE ROOM, AS ROACHES AND OTHER SOFT-BUT-MOIST BLACK FILTH-DWELLERS CRAWL AND SCUTTLE, AND DO WHATEVER ELSE INSECTS DO IN THE PUTRID DARKNESS OF THEIR SHORT LIVES.

HERE AND THERE A HINT OF HALF-LIGHT FILTERS THROUGH ROTTED BOARDS TACKED OVER CRUSTY WINDOWS -- AND IT IS ONLY THIS THAT TELLS TIM DONAHUE AND HIS NOW-CONSCIOUS CO-PRISONER -- YOURSELF -- THAT ANOTHER DAY IS IN PROGRESS.

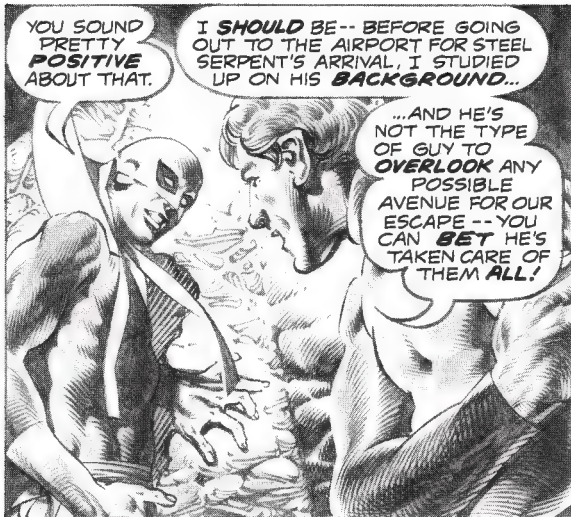
TIM DONAHUE WONDERS HOW THE INSECTS CAN TELL WHEN IT'S DAY OR NIGHT... OR WHETHER THEY EVEN CARE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TRYING TO FIND ANOTHER WAY OUT OF HERE IN THE DARK.

NO DICE.

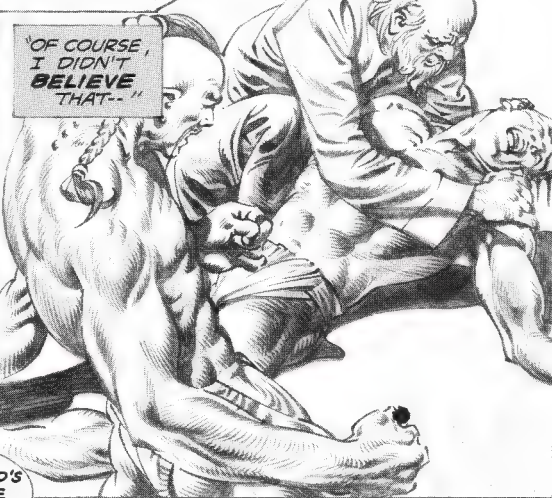
Plot: TONY ISABELLA Writer: DAVID KRAFT
Art: FRANK McLAUGHLIN & RUDY NEBRES



"YOU SEE, WHEN HE WAS 19 HE WON **TOP HONORS** IN A TOURNAMENT OF MARTIAL ARTS **MASTERS**--



"AS FOR HIS **OTHER** EXPLOITS, HE'D BEEN RUMORED TO HAVE MASTERED THE **DELAYED DEATH BLOW**, AND TO HAVE USED IT MORE THAN ONCE ON OPPONENTS.



YOU DO NOT REPLY.
INSTEAD--

--AS YOU STRIVE TO BRING ABOUT--

--THE IRON FIST!

--YOUR BODY TENSES
WITH CONCENTRATION--

THE EXTRAORDINARY
PHENOMENON KNOWN
AS--

HAI--

--YAHH!!

THE RESULTS ARE MOST...
IMPRESSIVE...

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
IT/ I
DON'T
BELIEVE
IT!

COME QUICKLY--
THE STEEL
SERPENT'S MEN
WILL NOT TAKE
LONG TO
INVESTIGATE
THE NOISE!

WHAT ARE
WE GOING
TO DO?

WHATEVER
FEELS...
NATURAL.





OKAY, WE'RE
CLEAR-- GO
FOR THE
POLICE!

ARE YOU
SURE ABOUT
THAT? IF YOU
NEED HELP...



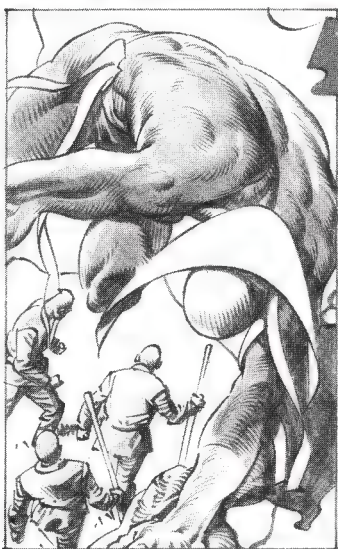
NO, JUST GET
GOING. I CAN TAKE
CARE OF MYSELF, NOW
THAT I'M **AWARE**
OF THOSE NEEDLES
--BY **AVOIDING** THEM.



TIM GOES, RELUCTANTLY--

--WHILE YOU--

--PREPARE
TO RENEW
BATTLE!



YOU OPEN, SILENTLY,
WITH A SPINE-
SNAPPING DRAGON
STAMP--



CHUK!

SKZAKK!

--AND FOLLOW WITH
A SIMPLE KNIFE SLASH!

IT IS ONLY **THEN** THAT YOUR
ANTAGONISTS BECOME
AWARE OF THE LIVING WEAPON!

--BECOMES
A HIGH
GUARD--

--AND THEN FLOWS INTO A HIGH
INSIDE BLOCK--



YIIAAEE!

BLUDD!

--THOUGH THAT **AWARENESS**
DOES THEM LITTLE GOOD.
A **MONKEY BLOW**--



WUOK!

--TO **AVERT** A
CLUMSY **ROCK SMASH**--



SHIK!

--TO **FORESTALL**
WITLESS **TREACHERY**--



THE BATTLE IS SHORT-LIVED OR AT LEAST SO YOU THINK, AS YOU TURN FROM THE MOANING AND THE PAIN TO SEEK OUT THE STEEL SERPENT--

--BUT VERY OBVIOUSLY, YOU ARE WRONG.

FORTUNATELY, YOU ARE ALSO--

--VERY CAREFUL!

YOUR RETURN TO THE CLEARING IS STEALTHY, SO SILENT THAT NOT EVEN THE TRAINED HEARING OF THE STUDENTS WHO SEARCH FOR YOU CAN DETECT YOUR APPROACH. UNTIL YOUR ANGRY CHALLENGE, THAT IS.

BUT THEN, OF COURSE--

--IT'S JUST SLIGHTLY TOO LATE--

TO DO THEM ANY GOOD!

A WHIPPING BRANCH BLOCK--

--FORMS THE PRELUDE FOR A LITTLE IMPROVISATION--

SPAK!

SHHKAKK

--IN THE WAY OF AN "ORDINARY" KICK IN THE FACE!

SILENCE...

...IS MOST
ESSENTIAL--

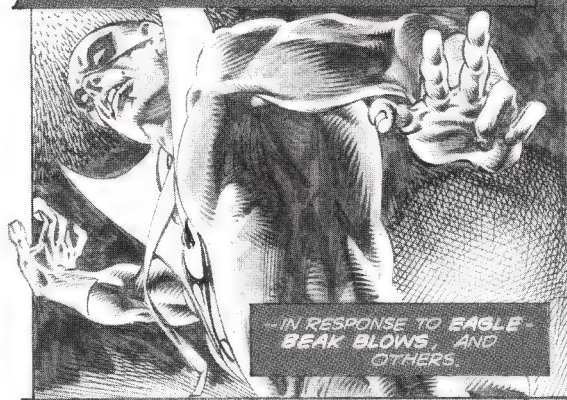
--NAY, MANDATORY--

--TO ACHIEVE THE DEGREE OF
CONCENTRATION NECESSARY
FOR A VITAL MARTIAL ARTS
CONFLICT... SUCH AS THIS!

NO ONE
SPEAKS



THERE ARE ONLY INVOLUNTARY WAILS OF PAIN--



--IN RESPONSE TO EAGLE-
BEAK BLOWS, AND
OTHERS.

WONDERING FOR A FLEETING INSTANT WHETHER TIM
DONAHUE HAS REACHED A TELEPHONE, YOUR CON-
CENTRATION SLIPS, AND YOUR SHUTO STROKE TO
THE SOLAR PLEXUS MISSES--



--ALTHOUGH
YOUR LEFT
HOOK
DOES
NOT!!





THEN, YOU
WHIRL TO THE
SOUND OF
SPOKEN
WORDS--

I KNOW IT IS **NOT** THE CUSTOM
TO **BOAST** DURING BATTLE, IRON
FIST... YET I FEEL **COMPELLED**
TO ANNOUNCE--

--YOUR
DEATH!

--YOU ONCE MORE
SUMMON--

--AND AS THE BELLIGERENT ONE
ADVANCES CONFIDENTLY--



--THE POWER OF THE
IRON FIST!

SHTOOOM

THE MAN IS **NO LONGER**
CAPABLE OF **BOASTING**--

THE BLOW RENDS FLESH AND SENDS A JARRING
FLASH OF **LIQUID PAIN** THROUGH YOUR VEINS. BUT
IF THE ASSAILANT EXPECTS THIS TO **PARALYZE**
THE FLASHILY-GARBED FIGURE BEFORE HIM--



--BUT HIS
SILENT
COMPATRIOT
TAKES
ADVANTAGE
OF YOUR
MOMENTARY
LOSS OF
STANCE TO
STRIKE.

--THEN HE DOES **NOT** KNOW
HIS OPPONENT.



THE YEARS AT K'UN-LUN WERE LONG--

--AND, FOR YOUR YOUTHFUL SELF--

--CONSISTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY OF CONSTANT TRAINING IN THE MARTIAL ARTS. YOU ACT--

--AND THE SOUND OF BONES CRACKING AS A RIB-CAGE CAVES INWARD LINGERS IN YOUR EARS AS YOU RISE.

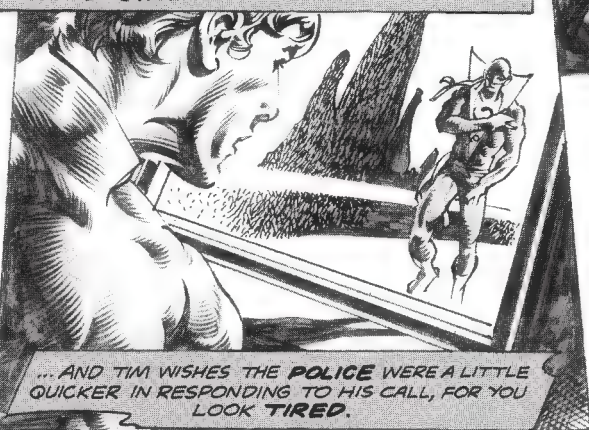
YOUR SHOULDER THROBS.

SURVEYING THE NOW-QUIESCENT NUMBERS OF THE STEEL SERPENT'S PUPILS, SPRAWLED IN GROTESQUE POSTURES ABOUT THE CLEARING, YOU **DISCOUNT** THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY **FURTHER** VIOLENCE FROM THEM.

THE BATTLE HAS **NOT** TAKEN LONG; FROM A BUILDING ACROSS THE MEADOW, TIM DONAHUE **WATCHES** AS YOUR STERN FIGURE RETURNS TO THE GYM...



IT IS THEIR MASTER YOU SEEK.



...AND TIM WISHES THE **POLICE** WERE A LITTLE QUICKER IN RESPONDING TO HIS CALL, FOR YOU LOOK **TIRED**.

STEEL SERPENT!

YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEARN **WHY** I AM CALLED--

-- THE **LIVING WEAPON!**

IS THAT SO, SON OF K'UN-LUN?

IN ALL HONESTY--

-- I THINK **NOT!**



YOU ARE NEAR
THE **END** OF
YOUR
ENDURANCE,
BUT YOU DO
NOT ALLOW
YOUR THOUGHTS
TO **DWELL**
ON THAT.

INSTEAD, YOU
STUDY THE
GIANT
BEFORE
YOU--

--AND WHEN YOU SEE AN
OPENING IN HIS DEFENSE--

--YOU STRIKE
WITH A **RAM'S**
HEAD BLOW!

THE SERPENT FEIGNS
WEAKNESS, HOPING
TO CATCH YOU OFF
GUARD--

--BUT **LEI KUNG THE THUNDERER**
TAUGHT YOU NOT TO BE SO
EASILY FOOLED--

--AND YOU **AVOID** THE
TREACHEROUS ATTACK WITH
WITH A **CHICKEN-HEAD**
BLOCK.

THEN, IT IS **YOUR** TURN TO
BECOME THE **AGGRESSOR**
IN THIS **BALLET OF VIOLENCE**
...TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE
INDEED--

A **LIVING**
WEAPON!

--EVEN THOUGH YOUR **OWN**
BATTERED BODY SEEKS TO
USURP YOUR **CONCENTRATION**
WITH ITS SILENT **SCREAMS**--

YOU DO NOT
REGRET SMASHING
OUT AT THIS BRUTAL
MURDERER--

--OF **FATIGUE**
AND PAIN.



JUST LIKE THE VILLAINS YOU HAVE
WATCHED ON TV AT PROFESSOR
WING'S--

YOU AVOID THE
SHURIKENS

--THE STEEL SERPENT
DOES NOT HESITATE TO EMPLOY
HIDDEN WEAPONS WHEN THE
GOING GETS ROUGH!

A FORWARD ROLL BRINGS YOU UNDER THE
SERPENT'S DEFENSES--

--FULLY UNHAMPERED,
A FLYING LIGHTNING
KICK!

ENABLING YOU TO
DELIVER--

THE SERPENT, HOWEVER--

I WILL NOW
CEASE TRYING TO
TAKE YOU ALIVE,
IRON FIST!

--DOES NOT SEEM
INCLINED TO APPRECIATE
YOUR SKILL.

WE
FIGHT
TO
KILL!

THE STEEL SERPENT HAS
LOST HIS TEMPER--

-- AND WHILE THE CONSUMING FEVER OF
ANGER HAS LENT HIS BLOWS MUCH POWER.



...IT ALSO APPEARS
TO HAVE ROBBED HIM--

--OF PROPER CAUTION AND
DEFENSE. IT IS A LESSON HE
HAS TAUGHT HIS STUDENTS
MANY TIMES--

THIS TIME, YOU HAVE BEEN
MISLED BY HIS ACTING--



--AND ONE THAT HE HAS
NOT FORGOTTEN HIMSELF!



--AND YOU PAY
THE PRICE!

PAIN SWALLOWS YOU
FOR A MOMENT--

--AND WHEN IT FINALLY REGURGITATES YOU, DEATH IS
THERE, ABOUT TO DESCEND!

--FOR THE STEEL SERPENT--

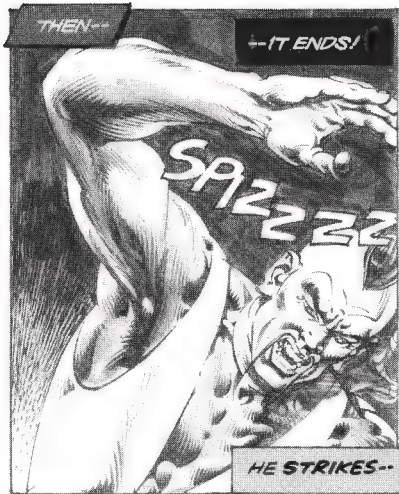


IT IS ETCHED IN
YOUR ENEMY'S EYES.

A SECOND BECOMES AN
ETERNITY OF
CONCENTRATION--



--AND FOR YOU!



THEN--

--IT ENDS!

HE STRIKES--



--AND YOU DEFEND!



AGAIN, DESPITE THE AMOUNT OF BLOWS EXCHANGED, THE BATTLE HAS BEEN SHORT. TIM DONAHUE ARRIVES JUST IN TIME TO SEE THAT LAST INCREDIBLE DISPLAY--

--AND HE STARES PERPLEXED AS THE STEEL SERPENT RISES--



--ALMOST AS IF IN A DAZE--



--AND TURNS HIS BACK ON YOU TO WALK SLOWLY AWAY

THERE IS SOMETHING HERE THAT TIM DONAHUE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND!



WHY ARE YOU LETTING HIM GO?

ANY MINUTE NOW--



--THE POLICE WILL BE HERE TO PICK HIM UP!



HE'S A MURDERER!

"HE IS ALSO A DEAD MAN," YOU EXPLAIN, SOFTLY, "FOR THE EFFECTS OF HIS DELAYED DEATH BLOW WERE REVERSED BY THE POWER OF THE IRON FIST."

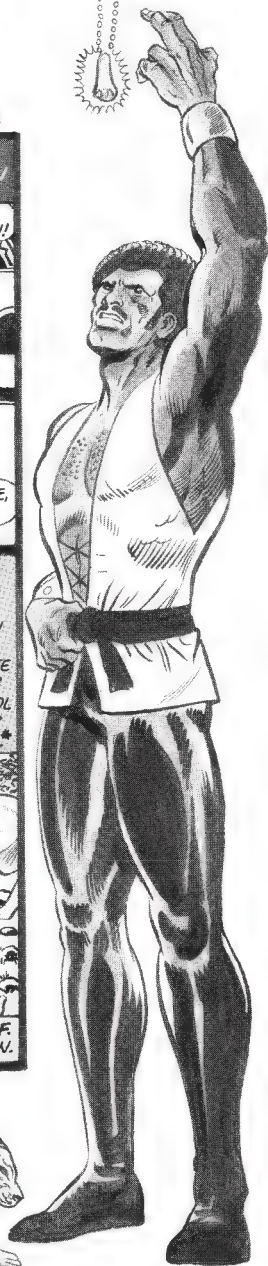
"HE HAS STRUCK DOWN HIS LAST VICTIM--

--HIMSELF--



SONS OF THE

TIGER



IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO SET THE WHEELS OF DEATH IN MOTION... SOMETIMES ONLY THE TOUCH OF A FINGER TO A BUTTON. BA-WHOOP! THE BRIDGE IS COMIN' DOWN!	BOB, THAT CHICK ALMOST BLEW US TO KINGDOM COME, MAN! I KNOW, ABE, BUT I'VE GOT A FEELING SHE WAS AS SURPRISED AS THE REST OF US BY THE EXPLOSION. AND SHE'S COMING WITH US.	SHE DID... TO AN APARTMENT ON CENTRAL PARK WEST... WE'LL TAKE IT, MRS. DALWOODY! SOME PLACE, HUH, LIN?
AND TWO YOUNG PEOPLE FIND A MOMENT OF PEACE IN THE STORM. BOB DIAMOND AND THE GIRL... LOTUS, IT'S A FINE NAME. OH ROBERT! I AM FRIGHTENED! THE SILENT ONES WON'T LET ME GO THIS EASILY.	AND SHE WAS RIGHT... I'M HURT KINDA BAD GUYS... HELP ME, OKAY?	THE SILENT ONES USED HER TO CAUSE PAIN UNTIL LIN SUN BROKE THEIR CONTROL OVER HER. *AS SHOWN IN DMKE #9--DELIGHTFUL DON.



WE ARE BORN TO THE WORLD OF NATURE; OUR SECOND BIRTH IS TO THE WORLD OF SPIRIT. -Bhagavad Gita

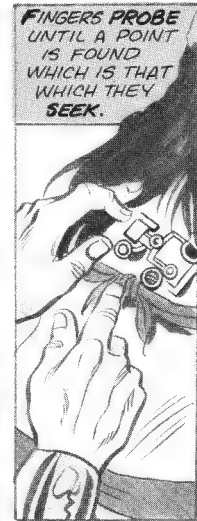
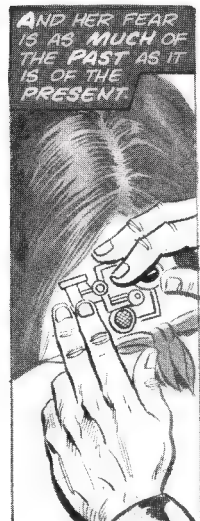
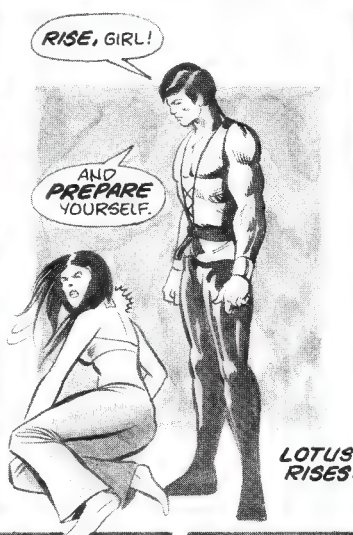
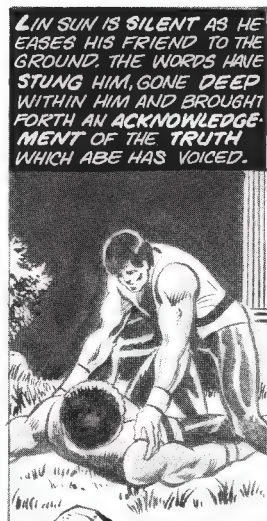
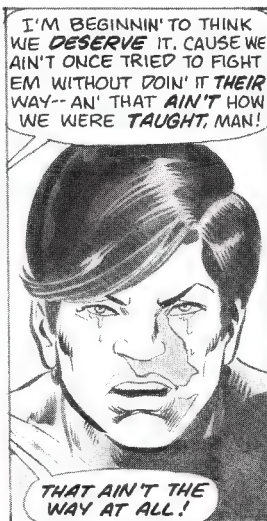


ENOUGH!
THERE MUST
BE AN
ENDING!

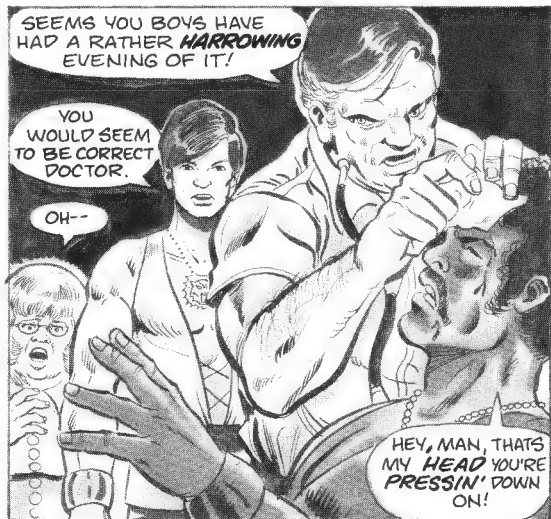
BY THE *SPIRIT* OF MASTER KEE
AND THE *AMULETS OF POWER* HE
ENTRUSTED TO US, I *SWEAR* I WILL
NOT REST UNTIL THE *SILENT ONES*
ARE *DESTROYED*!

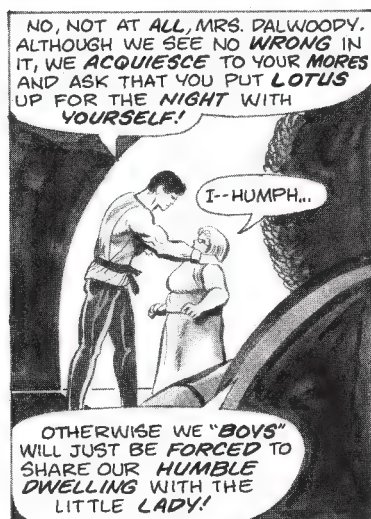
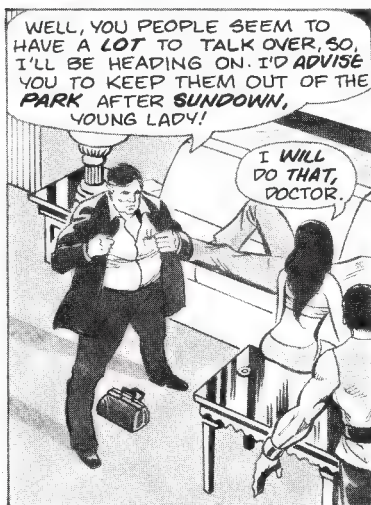
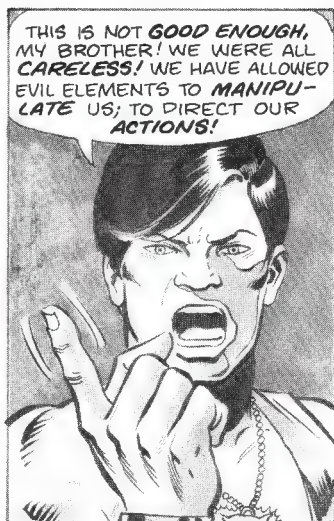
LIN! THE GIRL--THEY
GOT HER *WIRED* SOMEHOW--
THAT THING ON HER *NECK*
IS HOW *THEY* CONTROL HER--

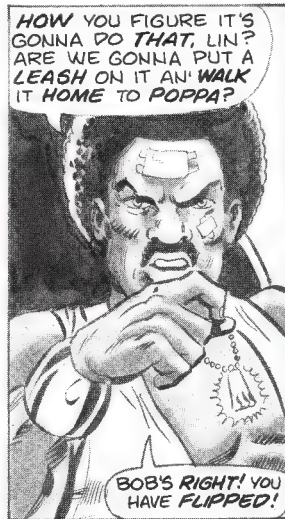
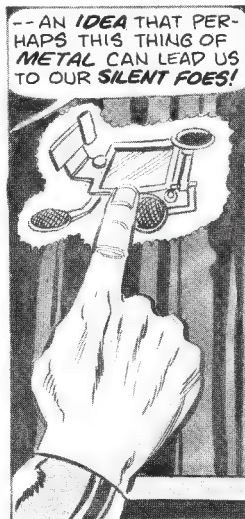
--THAT'S HOW THEY GAVE
HER THE *POWER* TO
WASTE ME AN' BOB!











FOR A LONG TIME NOW I HAVE FELT AS IF THERE IS MORE **POWER** TO THESE **AMULETS** WE WEAR THAN **ONLY** THE ABILITY TO **LINK** US AS ONE IN **COMBAT**! IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE BECOMING MORE **AWARE** OF THE CHOICES THAT LAY **OPEN** TO US, OF DIFFERENT **PATHS**, OF OTHER WAYS TO SEE **EXISTENCE**! EACH TIME WE JOIN HANDS AND SAY THE **TIGER OATH** THIS FEELING **GROWS**!



I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT... BUT I WISH TO TRY SOMETHING!

JOIN HANDS WITH ME, MY BROTHERS--



--AND LET US RECITE THE OATH--

--THE TIGER OATH!

AND LET OUR MINDS BE AS ONE!

"WHEN THREE ARE CALLED AND STAND AS ONE..."

...AS ONE THEY'LL FIGHT, THEIR WILL BE DONE...




...FOR EACH IS BORN ANEW...
THE TIGER'S SON!

THE DEVICE BEFORE THEM PULSES AND SHIMMERS. THEY HAVE GONE BEYOND A MERE LINKAGE OF PHYSICAL STRENGTH, BEYOND A PLANE THEY HAVE NEVER DREAMT OF, A PLANE THEY SHARE WITH...



HA-HA-HA! VERY GOOD, GENTLEMEN, VERY GOOD!

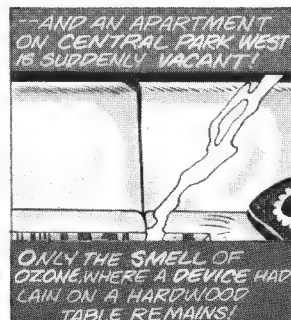
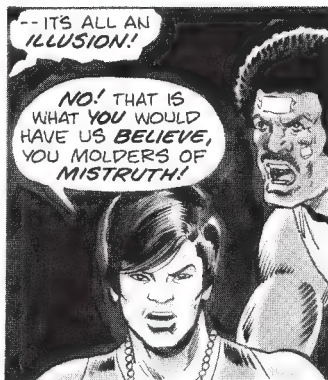
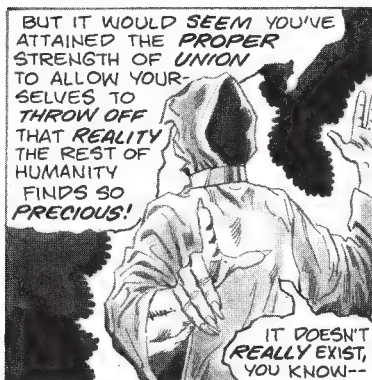
WE'VE BEEN WAITING QUITE A WHILE FOR THIS FIRST MEETING!

A PITY IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN SOONER!

BUT YOU WEREN'T READY!

THE APPARITION FLICKERS AND WAVERS BEFORE THEIR ASTONISHED EYES, ITS HOLLOW "VOICE" ECHOES ON...









LET THE BATTLE
BE JOINED!

TOO STUNNED TO
REACT, WISHING
NO STRIFE IN
THIS PLACE OF
BLISS, THE TIGERS
ARE SLOW TO
GATHER THEMSELVES



AND THE GUARDIANS STRIKE!

UNNNH!

EONS AGO, ANOTHER
SUCH FIELD OF
BATTLE WAS DRAWN.
THE TWO OPPOSING
FORCES OF DESTRUC-
TION AND LIFE
FACING EACH OTHER
ACROSS A META-
PHYSICAL PLANE



THOU WILT
SURELY FALL
IF THOU ART
TO PERSIST
IN SUCH
UNSTEADY
THOUGHT,
WARRIOR!

UNGGH!

I DESIREST
NOT THEY
DEMISE!

AND ON THAT FIELD
STOOD A CHAMPION,
A WARRIOR WHO
BATTLED FOR A
BALANCE TO EXIS-
TENCE, OPPOSING THE
FORCES OF CHAOS



AND AT THE SIDE OF THE WAR-
RIOR, WHOSE NAME WAS ARJUNA,
STOOD A GOD WHOSE POWER
EXTENDED OVER ALL OF NATURE
WHOSE BEING WAS THE
EMBODIMENT OF DHARMA

WHOOOF!

CHOK!

DOST THOU NOT
SEE, WARRIOR!
IF THOU DOST FALL
THUS DO WE! FOR
WE ARE NO MORE
THAN THE BALANCE
OF THYSELF!

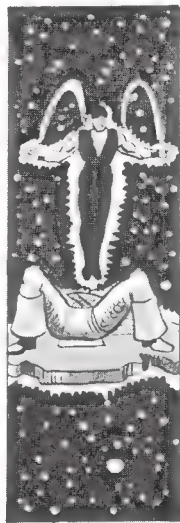
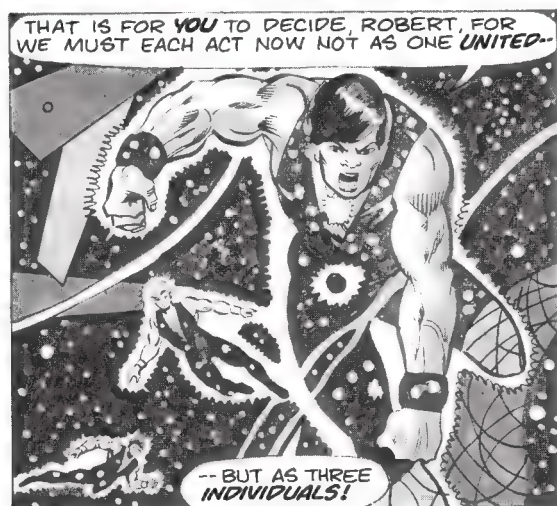
THE LORD'S NAME WAS KRISHNA!

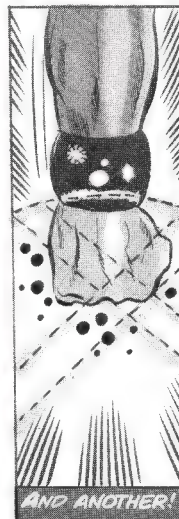
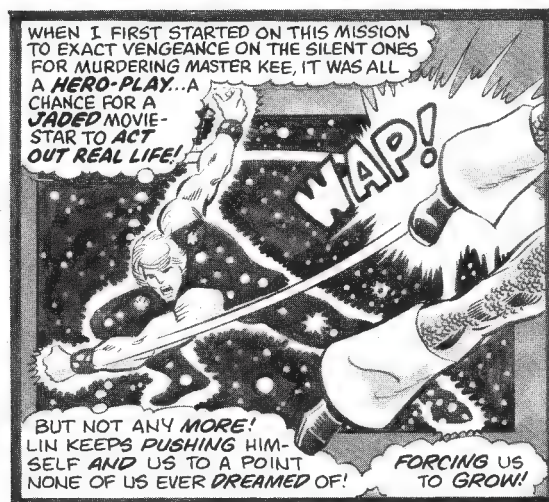


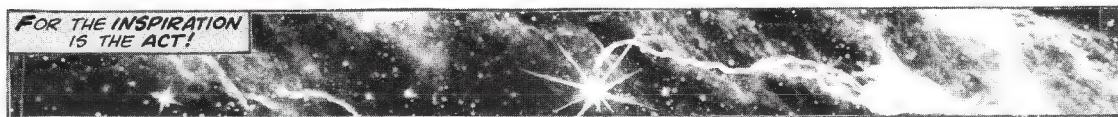
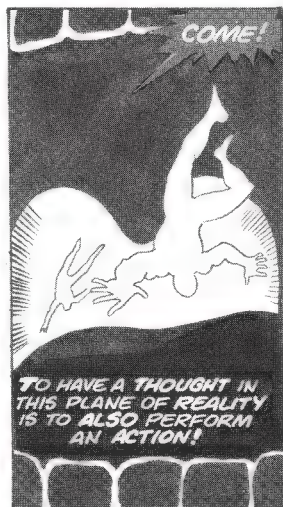
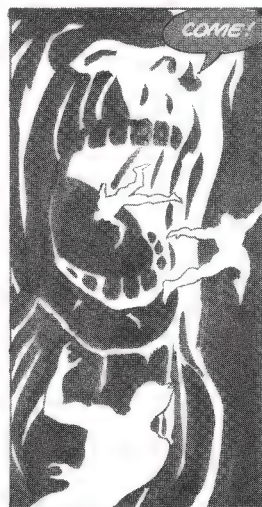
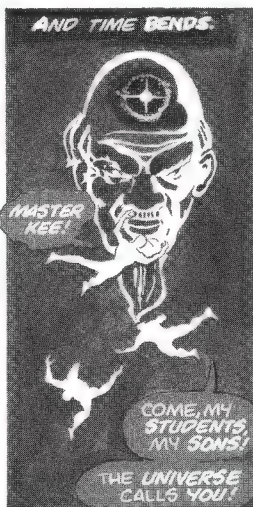
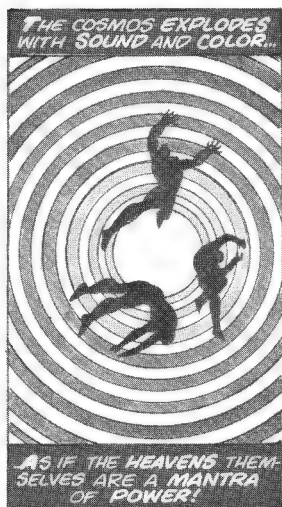
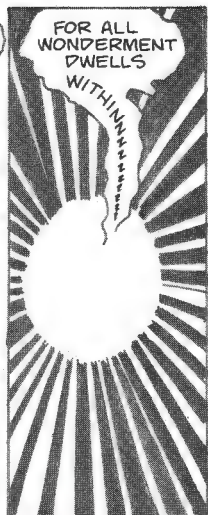
LIN! WE'VE GOT
TO RECITE THE OATH
OF THE TIGER OR
THESE GUYS WILL
KILL US!

NO!

CRIPES! I
THOUGHT YOU LOVED
THAT CORNY CHANT!









AH, YOU'VE MADE IT
HERE, GENTLEMEN!

BUT THE GAME IS
JUST BEGINNING--

--AND ON THIS
PLANE THE
BATTLE WILL
BE VERY,
VERY REAL!

WELCOME TO THE STRONGHOLD
OF THE SILENT ONES!

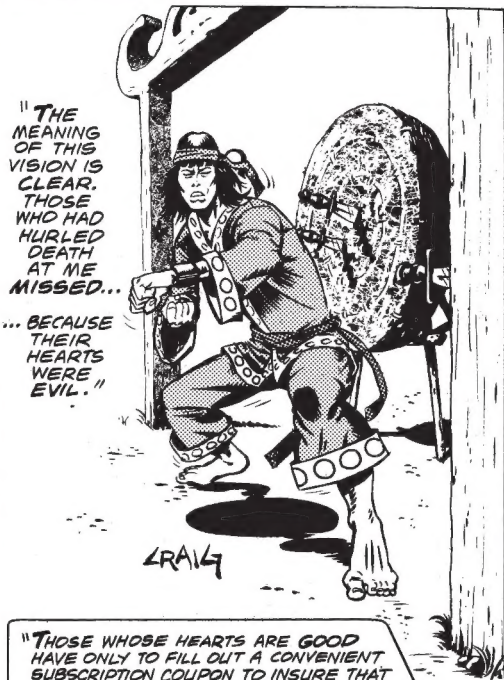
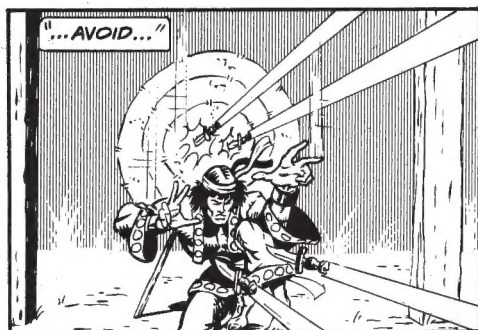
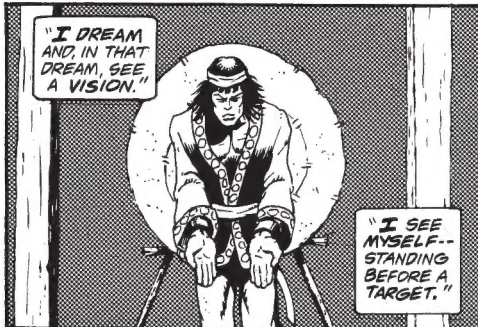
THE FIELD HAS
CHANGED, WARRIORS!

FOR CHANGE
IS ALL!

SHALL
THE BATTLE
BEGIN?

BE READY MY BROTHERS,
FOR TODAY WE BATTLE--
TO THE DEATH!

THE SHAPING OF A SUBSCRIPTION



"THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE GOOD HAVE ONLY TO FILL OUT A CONVENIENT SUBSCRIPTION COUPON TO INSURE THAT THEY WILL NOT MISS A SINGLE ISSUE OF THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU OR ANY OF MARVEL'S MAGAZINE MASTERPIECES."

"THE MEANING OF THIS VISION IS INDEED CLEAR."

"IT IS ALSO GROSSLY COMMERCIAL AND THIS SADDENS ME."

"ALAS, EVEN THOSE WHO CHRONICLE THE RISING AND ADVANCING OF MY SPIRIT HAVE YET TO DEFEAT THE MATERIALISTIC BLOCKADES TO THEIR SPIRITS' OWN JOURNEYS."

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